

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8754

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EXDIS

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: SA, EG, MASS

SUBJ: SAUDI PAYMENTS FOR ARMS FOR EGYPT

1. OMAR SAQQAF, MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TOLD ME LAST NIGHT (SEPT 22) THAT PRINCE SULTAN WOULD RAISE WITH ME TODAY THE QUESTION OF SAUDI PAYMENTS FOR ARMS FOR EGYPT. HE WOULD SAY THAT EGYPT HAD DECIDED THAT THE LEAD TIMES ON DELIVERIES FOR ARMS FROM THE UNITED STATES WAS TOO LONG; SAUDI ARABIA SHOULD THEREFORE ALLOW EGYPT TO REDIRECT THE MONEY IT HAD GIVEN EGYPT FOR PURCHASES FROM THE UNITED STATES AND USE IT FOR PURCHASES FROM FRANCE.

2. I SAW SULTAN THIS AFTERNOON (SEPT 23). HE DID RAISE THE SUBJECT WITH MINOR VARIATIONS. HE SAID PRESIDENT NIXON AND SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD PROMISED ARMS FOR EGYPT IF SAUDI ARABIA WOULD PAY FOR THEM. SAUDI ARABIA AGREED TO AN INITIAL GRANT OF \$200 MILLION. THE SAUDIS HAVE JUST BEEN TOLD BY THE EGYPTIANS THAT URGENTLY REQUIRED ITEMS CANNOT BE DELIVERED SOON; THE SHORTEST DELIVERY TIME WAS SIX MONTHS AND SOME ITEMS COULD NOT BE DELIVERED WITHIN TWO YEARS. SULTAN SAID HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THIS. WAS THE UNITED STATES BACKING DOWN ON ITS WORD? THE WHOLE MATTER SEEMED PARTICULARLY STRANGE IN THE LIGHT OF THE APPARENT

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IMMEDIATE POSITIVE RESPONSE OF THE UNITED STATES TO

ISRAEL'S MOST RECENT REQUESTS FOR ARMS. SAUDI ARABIA,
HE REMINDED ME, PAID CASH.

3. SULTAN SAID THE MAIN REASON FOR SAUDI ARABIA SUPPLY-
ING EGYPT THE MONEY FOR THE ARMS WAS TO WEAN EGYPT AWAY
FROM DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIET UNION. SAUDI ARABIA WANTED
EGYPT TO BUY THE ARMS FROM THE UNITED STATES. IT WANTED
TO TIE EGYPT MORE CLOSELY TO THE UNITED STATES; BUT
EGYPT NEEDED ARMS AND IT NEEDED THEM IMMEDIATELY. SULTAN
SAID HE HOPED THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE RESPONSIVE.
IF IT CANNOT BE, HE HOPED THE U.S. WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT
THERE WILL BE NO RECOURSE BUT TO TURN TO EUROPEAN SUP-
PLIERS. (HE DID NOT RPT NOT SAY THE DECISION HAD ALREADY
BEEN MADE TO GO TO FRANCE.)

4. THE AMBASSADOR SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT WEAPONS
WERE INVOLVED; AND HE WAS NOT SURE IF THE EUROPEANS
WOULD BE ANY FASTER. IN ANY CASE HE WOULD REPORT THE
PRINCE'S CONCERNS IMMEDIATELY TO WASHINGTON.
AKINS

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